

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 SAJ-01 /071 W

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R 201855Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0600

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PLAB, FR

1. SUMMARY. DURING HIS 19 JUNE PRESS CONFERENCE CALLED PRIMARILY IN CONNECTION WITH CGT CONGRESS 22-27 JUNE, GEORGES SEGUY, CGT SEC GEN, WAS ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE REPUBLICA AFFAIR IN PORTUGAL. HE RECOGNIZED THAT THERE IS A POLITICAL DIMENSION TO THIS BUT INSISTED THAT COMMUNIST INFLUENCE WAS MINIMAL. END SUMMARY.

2. BY WAY OF BACKGROUND SEGUY, ACCOMPANIED BY THREE OTHER MEMBERS OF CGT CONFEDERAL BUREAU, FOUND HIMSELF IN LISBON WHEN THE REPUBLICA AFFAIR EXPLODED. IN THE CONTROVERSY THAT FOLLOWED AND FOR REASONS WHICH ARE THE SUBJECT OF CONSIDERABLE SPECULATION (SEE BELOW), SEGUY ISSUED A LONG STATEMENT UPON HIS RETURN DESIGNED TO EXPRESS FIRST-HAND WITNESS OF WHAT THE REPUBLICA WAS ALL ABOUT. SEGUY'S STATEMENT, WHICH STRUCK OBSERVERS AS RATHER UNUSUAL BOTH IN FORM AND CONTENT, MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:
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(A) AFFAIR WAS STRICTLY A CLASSIC LABOR DISPUTE;

(B) THE PRINTERS UNION WAS REACTING TO FEARS OF LAY-OFFS BECAUSE REPUBLICA, TOGETHER WITH OTHER PORTUGUESE

NEWSPAPERS, WAS GETTING INTO FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES:

(C) THERE ARE ONLY 5 OR 6 COMMUNISTS IN THE REPUBLICA PRINTERS UNION, THEREFORE THE CLAIM OF COMMUNIST INFLUENCE BEHIND THE UNION'S ACTION WAS UNFOUNDED; AND

(D) REPUBLICA WAS NOT THE OFFICIAL SOCIALIST PARTY ORGAN.

3. WHILE THE CONTROVERSY ABOUT THE REPUBLICA CONTINUED STRONG NONE OF THE COMMENTATORS OR REPORTERS TOOK SEGUY'S STATEMENT SERIOUSLY ENOUGH AS TO EVEN REFER TO IT. THIS BROUGHT CROCODILE TEARS IN L'HUMANITE COLUMNS WHICH CONCLUDED THAT THE WHOLE ADO ABOUT REPUBLICA WAS TYPICAL BOURGEOIS REACTION TO THE REVOLUTIONARY SPIRIT THAT EXISTS IN PORTUGAL.

4. SEGUY'S RESPONSES TO THE REPORTERS' QUESTIONS REVEALED AN ATTEMPT TO BACK-OFF FROM HIS PREVIOUS STATEMENT. HE ADMITTED NOW THAT THERE IS A POLITICAL DIMENSION IN THE REPUBLICA AFFAIR BUT INSISTED ON THE INSIGNIFICANT ROLE THE COMMUNISTS HAVE PLAYED IN IT, STRESSING THIS TIME THAT ACCORDING TO HIS INFORMATION THE SPOKESMAN AND NEGOTIATOR FOR THE UNION IS NOT A COMMUNIST BUT A PSP MEMBER.

5. IN A CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF AFTER THE CONFERENCE, SEGUY MADE THE POINT THAT THE "CGT HOPES SINCERELY" THAT THE REPUBLICA WILL RESUME PUBLICATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. ASKED WHY HE RESERVED THIS STATEMENT FOR A

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PRIVATE CONVERSATION AND DID NOT MAKE IT PUBLIC AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE, SEGUY REPLIED THAT THIS WOULD CONSTITUTE INTERFERENCE IN PORTUGUESE AFFAIRS. EMBOFF POOH-POOHED SEGUY'S COMMENT AND HE RESIGNED TO SILENCE.

6. TWO THEORIES ARE OFFERED TO EXPLAIN WHY SEGUY, WHO IS KNOWN FOR HIS SHREWDNESS, ALLOWED HIMSELF TO GET SO INVOLVED IN REPUBLICA. ONE THEORY CONTENTS THAT SEGUY HAD COME UNDER SOME CRITICISM IN PCF QUARTERS FOR HIS "LIBERAL" VIEWS AND USED THIS INCIDENT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEMONSTRATE THAT HE CAN BE AS HARDLINER AS ANYONE ELSE KNOWN FOR HIS SHREWDNESS, ALLOWED HIMSELF TO GET SO INVOLVED IN REPUBLICA. ONE THEORY CONTENTS THAT SEGUY HAD COME UNDER SOME CRITICISM IN PCF QUARTERS FOR HIS "LIBERAL" VIEWS AND USED THIS INCIDENT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEMONSTRATE THAT HE CAN BE AS HARDLINER AS ANYONE ELSE IN THE PCF. THE OTHER THEORY CLAIMS THAT SEGUY WAS TOLD BY THE PCF TO ISSUE HIS STATEMENT IN ORDER TO REINFORCE THE PCF VIEW THAT THIS IS A LABOR ISSUE OVERPLAYED IN FRANCE FOR INTERNAL POLITICAL REASONS. WE HAD OPPORTUNITY TO CHECK THIS THEORY WITH KNOWLEDGEABLE PEOPLE BOTH IN AND OUTSIDE CGT-PCF

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WHO REJECTED IT WITHOUT RESERVATIONS. ON THE GROUNDS THAT "NO ONE TELLS SEGUY WHAT TO SAY OR NOT TO SAY."

7. CGT INSIDERS WHO HAVE THE REPUTATION OF SPEAKING WITH SOME DEGREE OF DETACHMENT, AT LEAST ON SOME ISSUES, BELIEVE THAT SEGUY SIMPLY TOOK ON FACE VALUE THE INTERSINDICAL EXPLANATION OF WHAT HAD HAPPENED IN REPUBLICA AND THOUGHT THAT BY REPEATING THE INTERSINDICAL VERSION HE WAS HELPING PUT THE WHOLE AFFAIR IN A BETTER PERSPECTIVE AS FAR AS FRANCE WAS CONCERNED. HE SIMPLY DID NOT ANTICIPATE AT THE TIME THE POLITICAL DIMENSION REPUBLICA WAS TO ACQUIRE FOR FRANCE IF NOT FOR PORTUGAL. ALTHOUGH WE ARE NOT TOTALLY CONVINCED BY THIS EXPLANATION, WE FIND IT SLIGHTLY MORE PLAUSIBLE THAN EITHER OF THE FOREGOING TWO.

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